COLLECTION AND SERVICES OF ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES IN SOUTH INDIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Law libraries play a vital role in shaping the quality of legal system by the virtue of their unique collection and services. They play a major role in helping the public protect its legal rights. They also protect the availability and quality of legal information at reasonable cost ensuring open and authorized access to everyone. A law librarian in a law institute is knowledgeable about all the aspects relevant to legal information. Hence, a law librarian becomes an effective legal information specialist, as they possess all essential characteristic traits, attitude and skills needed. They serve the user community in a well manner by directing them towards the right source of information within a short span of time.

"Law is regarded as the cement of a society .It is an essential medium of social change. Knowledge of law increases one's understanding of public affairs. Its study promotes accuracy of expression, felicity in argument and skill in interpretation of the written word, as well as understanding of social values"(Williams,2002).

Law institutes produce lawyers, law makers and counselors for the country, hence they become a major building block of the legal and judicial system of the nation. Thus arises a need to study about the Academic Law Libraries, in terms of their collection and services of the country.

1.1 ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES IN SOUTH INDIA

An Academic Law Library refers to a library which is attached to a law school which exists to serve, support and enhance the teaching, learning, reference and research needs of the law community .The users of such libraries will be students, faculty members and the other legal staff. It is the heart of an academic institution and plays a major role in all the academic activities.

"Generally, the objectives of library depend upon the type of the library. The objectives of library are fulfilled through the functions and operations. The objective of special library is the provision of information in support of the objectives of its parent organization. Although special libraries exist in wide variety of organizations and most of them are units of larger but these are established to serve only a particular group of users or specialists working on a subject or a group of subject or on a particular type of documents" (Dhar,2010).

"Law library plays a vital role in the administration of justice .It is an institution of extraordinary social significance in a free society. Inspiring the men and the women of vision who devote their talents to the creation and preparation of law libraries, whose benefits reach out far and beyond the personal interest of the original creators" (Tewari,1997).

The present study is centered around the academic law libraries of South India.There are around 135 law institutes in South India including Government and private law colleges and universities .

2 COLLECTION

Collection in a library generally refers to the possessions of library or information sources both print and non print materials such as books, periodicals, microfiches and CDs.

Apart from books of law, the library needs to stock authoritative books from other branches like philosophy, political science, public administration, economics etc. It must also stock language dictionaries, dictionaries of law, judicial dictionary and thesaurus.

The primary sources of information related to the law are books of law as a subject like, Constitutional Laws, Acts, Decrees, Edicts, Gazettes, Law Reports i.e Court Decisions, Regulation and Ruling of Administrative Agencies.

The secondary sources of information are information sources of law which are not of specific legal authority but varies widely in quality, form and authority . For example: journals, textbooks, commentaries, restatements, treatises and other periodicals.

Tertiary source of information in a law library provide access to large body of law, great number of decisions and statutes issued over a large period of time. For example: Digests of decisions, citations, encyclopedia, phrase books, annotated statutory compilations, loose leaf services and indexes.

All the sources are available in print and non print in databases such as Lawtell, Lexis-Nexis and the Internet.

According to Parameswaran (1997), Collection development is systematic planning and rational building of library material. The term includes all activities involved in assessing the users' need ,evaluating the present collection, determining the selection policy, coordinating the selection of items ,re-evaluating and storing parts of the collection and planning for resource sharing. It is not a single activity but an agglomeration of activities"

Collection development is a plan which can be implemented and evaluated:

- Collection planning – a design to acquire documents
- Collection implementation – process of making documents available
- Collection evaluation – examining and judging the relevance in relation to goals and objectives

  ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science (1993), defines collection development as "a term which encompasses number of activities related to the development of library collection, including determination and coordination of selection policy, assessment of needs of users and potential users, collection use studies, collection evaluation, identification of collection needs, selection of materials, planning for resource sharing ,collection maintenance and weeding."

Collection development is a blue print for the maintenance and expansion of libraries' in all formats, as a result the library is able to allocate adequate funds wisely and shape a strong collection and make the user aware about the nature of collection.

3 SERVICES

Services in a law library refers to the facilities,activities and functions done by the library to meet their needs or to help users direct toward the right source of information and other information related requirements seen in other libraries like reference service, translation service, selective dissemination of information (SDI),resource sharing, current awareness service (CAS) and reprographic service .

The present study is intended to cover the overall aspect of collection in academic law libraries which includes the collection, management, administration and the collection development policies along with the quality and extent of services being provided in the academic libraries of South India.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Owoeye and Owoeye ,(2019)conducted a study on "collection management practices and use of law libraries by undergraduate students of selected universities in Nigeria" which was aimed at examining the collection management practices and uses of law libraries by undergraduate students of selected universities of Nigeria by adopting a descriptive research design. Every tenth member of the total population in each of the universities were studied. Questionnaire method was used for data collection and results analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that the undergraduate students visit libraries to read and utilize information materials available in law libraries. The study further revealed that there is a relation between collection management practices and use of libraries information resources by law students in Nigerian universities. The study recommends the law librarians to carry out a thorough analysis of user needs and also include the law faculty members and students in the collection building to guarantee effective utilization of resources.

Perumal,(2019)conducted a study on "evaluation of law libraries in SVKM'S Group of Institutions" among the student users of all the three law colleges : Pravin Gandhi College of Law , Jitendra Chauhan College of Law and NMIMS School of Law; under SVKM Group of Institutions. The evaluation was based on two broad categories one being the reading materials and other the man power. Questionnaire method was used for data collection. Questionnaire with questions regarding availability, quality, relevancy, library staff , seating arrangement and database services were distributed among the library users. The study reveals that, there is a relationship between library awareness and library usage. The study strongly recommend the need for library orientation to understand the library procedures, persons working in the library and reading materials available in the library.

Khayel,(2013) conducted a doctoral research on the topic "Collection Development and Services of Law Libraries in Delhi : A Comparitive Study" among the six selected Law Libraries in Delhi which includes three Academic Libraries and three Special Law Libraries;

Indian Law Institute Library, Law library –University of Delhi, Law library – Jamia Millia Islamia, Supreme Court Judges Library ,High Court Judges Library and Parliament Library by focusing mainly on collection development criteria of documents, collection evaluation methods, users' assessment method and different type of services provided by these libraries. Questionnaire, observation and document review techniques were used for the data collection. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared separately, one for the library professionals the Librarian/Head of the Library /Director and the other for users such as faculty members, research scholar and students of the law libraries under the study. From the study it is found that,the Special Law Libraries have a good collection, adequate budget as well as well qualified library staff to serve its users ,whereas the case of Academic Law Libraries under study with regard to the collection, budget, qualified staff and services provided is not found to be satisfactory.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Legal rights are defined as "right to have rights" and is often referred to as civil rights or statutory rights. As a result legal professionals including lawyers and counselors play a major role in ensuring the protection of legal rights of citizens. Hence the libraries attached to law institutions play a major role in meeting the information needs of the budding legal professionals. Thus there is a need to examine the overall status of law libraries of academic institutes in terms of its collection, facilities including infrastructure and the services ,whether they are sufficient to meet the requirements of law students and faculties. Thus making them competent enough to ensure the protection of legal rights of citizens. Hence the present study is tentatively entitled as "***Collection and Services of Academic Law Libraries in South India****"*

4. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The operational definitions used in title of study is presented below:

4.1 COLLECTION

According to Oxford English Dictionary, collection is defined as "the action or process of collecting someone or something".

In the present study collection refers to the library collection in the Law colleges.

4.2 SERVICES

According to Oxford English Dictionary, service is referred to "the action of helping or doing work for someone"

4.3 LAW LIBRARIES

According to Encyclopedic Dictionary of Library and Information Science, law library is defined as "A type of special library with a collection consisting of primarily materials for legal research and study, including case laws, federal and state statutes, international legal arguments, treatises, reference works, legal periodicals and electronic research tools. A

law library is maintained by a court, school or a legal firm is normally managed by a librarian who may hold a J.D degree in addition to the M.L.S or M.L.I.S"

4.4 SOUTH INDIA

South India is the area including the five southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, along with the three union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Puducherry, occupying 19% of India's area(635,780km^2).Covering the southern part of the peninsular Deccan Plateau ,South India is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east ,the Arabian Sea in the west and Indian Ocean in the south. It has a diverse geography with two mountain ranges the Western Ghats and the Eastern Ghats.

5. OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the status of collection of academic law libraries in south India
2. To examine the collection development policies of academic law libraries in south India
3. To determine the method of selection of materials in academic law libraries of south India
4. To evaluate the organization of collections in academic law libraries of south India
5. To determine the budget of academic law libraries in south India
6. To assess the purpose of visit to academic law libraries in south India
7. To determine the use and awareness of library services being provided
8. To assess the satisfaction level of users in the library services
9. To examine the barriers/hinderence in exploiting library services
10. To recommend suggestions for the betterment of library resources, facilities and services

6. HYPOTHESES

1. There is no adequate collection and services in most of the academic law libraries in south India
2. Most of the law schools have not adopted a uniform collection development policy
3. The collections are not well organized in most of the academic law libraries
4. There is no adequate budget allotment in most of the academic law libraries
5. Most of the users are neither aware nor satisfied with the services available in the academic law libraries
6. Most of the users in academic law libraries come across numerous barriers in exploiting the sources and services

7. NEED AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Law and justice is the fundamental right of an Indian citizen. The lawyers and the legal community play a major role building a strong nation. Hence there is a need to ensure the capacity and strength of academic law libraries as they are responsible for providing adequate

assistance in the form of sources and services, and as the law colleges are responsible for producing legal professionals for the country.

This study is quite significant as it covers the area which has been less explored according to the available literature.

8.RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study aims to determine the overall picture of Academic Libraries of South India, under the observation in the terms of collection and services being provided. The population includes the law libraries attached to law institutes in south India. There are around 135 law institutes in south India including private and government colleges. Questionnaires will be distributed to the representative samples using random sampling techniques along with interview and observation. The collected data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques.

9.SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The present study is aimed to analyze the complete outlook of academic law libraries under observation under the purview of aspects like selection of materials, the collection and in terms of the services being provided.

The present study is limited to the academic law libraries in south India

10. CONCLUSION

Since the law has always been information based and information intensive, libraries are indispensible for the people associated with law. And therefore studying about the libraries in the institution, that is responsible for producing the legal professionals is need of the hour. The present study makes elaborate assessment on academic law libraries in south India. Based on the study, the investigator will put forth suggestions thus it will help in improving the functions, collection and services of libraries and creating awareness among the population about various sources and services.

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